

Message Text

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42

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /058 W

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R 111015Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4899

INFO AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE ABU DHABI 2440

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS : PINT, TC

SUBJECT : TRIUMPHAL RETURN FOR SHAIKH ZAYED

REF: ABU DHABI 2120, ABU DHABI 2300

1. SHAIKH ZAYED RETURNED TO ABU DHABI THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 9, TO BE GREETED BY LARGE AND ENTHUSIASTIC CROWD PRAISING HIS ACHIEVEMENTS AND DEMANDING THAT HE CONTINUE AS PRESIDENT OF UAE. (REFTELS) GIVEN THE FACT THAT THE LOCAL PRESS, NOT NOTED FOR ITS ABILITY TO PROGNOSTICATE, HAD BEEN PREDICTING FOR SEVERAL DAYS THAT SUCH A WELCOME WOULD AWAIT SHAIKH ZAYED, ONE CANNOT CHALK THIS DEMONSTRATION UP TO A GROUND SWELL OF SPONTANEOUS ENTHUSIASM. IT WAS NEVERTHELSS IMPRESSIVE.

2. THE AIRPORT BALCONY WAS FILLED WITH SOME ONE THOUSAND BANNER CARRYING STUDENTS, GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, ET AL. CENTRALLY LOCATED CHEERING SECTION COMPLETE WITH MICROPHONE HOOKED UP TO LOUD SPEAKER TRUCK, KEPT UP THE ENTHUSIASM DURING THE SEVERAL HOUR WAIT FOR THE

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PLANE TO ARRIVE. SLOGANS AND BANNERS PREDICTABLY CALLED

ON ZAYED TO CONTINUE IN OFFICE AND PRAISED HIS EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF UNION -- E.G. "NO SUBSTITUTE FOR YOU, ZAYED", "YOUR LEADERSHIP OF UNION IS STRENGTH TO US AND THE ARABS", "LONG LIVE ZAYED LEADER OF THE UNION", "UNION IS STRENGTH, OH RULERS". ON THE TARMAC, IN ADDITION TO FURTHER CROWDS WITH BANNERS, WERE ASSEMBLED ALL THE LEADING LIGHTS--DIPLOMATIC CORPS, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, MILITARY AND OF COURSE THE RULING FAMILIES OF ABU DHABI AND THE OTHER EMIRATES. THERE HAD TO BE SEVERAL HUNDRED OF US--MORE THAN EVEN WERE ASSEMBLED FOR KING KHALID'S VISIT LAST MARCH--TRULY A GOOD SHOW FOR A HOT STICKY NIGHT IN RAMADAN.

3. ON ARRIVAL, AFTER EXCHANGING SHAIKHLY GREETINGS WITH RASHED, SAQR, ET AL AT PLANE SIDE, ZAYED MOVED TOWARDS THE CROWDS AND FRANKLY NEARLY GOT MOBBED. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A SECRET SERVICE MAN'S NIGHTMARE. EVEN HERE ONE SAW THE COURT CHAMBERLAIN AND MFA PROTOCOL OFFICERS USED TO NOTHING MORE STRENUOUS THAN LINING UP DIPLOMATS, LINKING ARMS AND FIGHTING TO HOLD BACK CROWDS SO SHAIKH ZAYED COULD MOVE DOWN THE LINE. PREDICTABLY, ZAYED SEEMED UNCONCERNED AND IN FACT WAS CLEARLY ENJOYING HIMSELF. ONCE THE HANDSHAKES WERE OVER, HOWEVER, HE WAS QUICKLY HUSTLED AWAY FROM HIS OVERLY ENTHUSIASTIC WELL WISHERS.

4. COMMENT: IMPRESSIVE AS IT WAS, WHAT IT ALL ADDS UP TO IS ANOTHER QUESTION. AND WHAT SHAIKH RASHED THOUGHT OF THE WHOLE EXERCISE (HE WAS TOO FAR AWAY TO OBSERVE HIS SOMETIMES HIGHLY EXPRESSIVE COUNTENANCE) WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW. CLEARLY, HOWEVER, WITH ZAYED NOW BACK, THE JOCKEYING FOR CONCESSIONS OF INCREASED POWER AND GREATER UNITY IN RETURN FOR HIS CONTINUATION AS PRESIDENT WILL BEGIN IN EARNEST. PRINCE FAHD IS REPORTEDLY DUE TO PAY UAE VISIT IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND PRESUMABLY HE TOO WILL GET INVOLVED IN THIS EXERCISE. IN SHORT, THE LAST TWO WEEKS OF RAMADAN ARE LIKELY TO BE BIT MORE LIVELY THAN THE FIRST TWO.

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